

## POLYCHROMATIC DECORATIONS.

At a meeting of the Decorative Art Society, on the 11th inst., a paper was read by Mr. Crabb on "Polychromatic Decorations," illustrated by numerous Oriental and Italian drawings. The writer prefaced his remarks by expressing regret that the Government School of Design had not found ability to take up the subject, the importance of which, at the present time, demanded more extended and immediate consideration than the society might probably bestow upon it. The laws and operations of colours were then briefly described, and followed by an allusion to the mental gratification, distinct from other benefits, which would accompany an extended acquaintance with the principles that have regulated the practice of polychromatic art in past times. It was argued, that, in admitting colour to have a powerful effect upon the mind, exalting the animal spirits according to the introduction of brilliant and stimulating hues, or depressing them by quiet and neutralizing tones, it would follow as a great fundamental principle, that for decorative purposes we should adopt a style of colouring tending to induce or promote the peculiar train of sentiment for which the building or apartment is chiefly intended. Mr. Crabb stated, that the purpose of his paper was to elicit some ready means by which to classify the distinct styles of polychromatic art for practical utility, and he proposed an arrangement under three grand divisions. The first,—applying to Greek and Roman architecture only, would include colouring by the Greeks and Romans, and by the Italians at the revival to the combination of ornamental with historical art; with subdivisions to ecclesiastical and palatial edifices, and a distinct appropriation to the particular style of decorative art practised at Venice; the second division to embrace early Oriental, Byzantine, and Arabian Art, and the application to Gothic architecture with subdivisions; the third division to comprise the second Revival in Bavaria and France, and its anticipated extension to England. He then observed, that antecedently to the 15th century we find in Roman buildings, as the baths of Titus, the walls of Pompeii, &c., decorations of a light style of Arabesque painting occupying the larger proportion of surface, with brilliant colours introduced as accessories, but kept subordinate in importance to the mythological tableaux. It was said, that these decorations were well-calculated to impart cheerful embellishment to chambers which were imperfectly lighted or of small size, and that they are distinguished for a pleasing proportion of relative parts, and display in many instances the great refinement and elegance of Greek art. Also that, subsequently to the 15th century, the palatial edifices of Italy exhibit the revival of a similar style, at first inferior in proportions design, but afterwards, owing to the extraordinary talent of the artists, greatly superior, as instanced in Raphael's Loggia, the hall of the Villa Madama, the Ducal Palace of Mantua, the Gallery of Cupid and Psyche in the Palace Farnesina, and other great works executed in Milan and Genoa; also that the churches and ecclesiastical buildings were marked by an increased richness of effect, as the magnificent church of St. Maurizio, Milan, and in the church and superb dome of St. Maria del Popolo, Rome.

He then referred to the library of the cathedral of Siena, where the tableaux assume the importance of histories, and the richest Arabesques upon scarlet, blue, and golden grounds, are assisted by exquisite stuccos and a connecting series of paintings of the history of Pope Pius II., and yet further, in the Campo Santa at Pisa; and in the Capella Sistina, Rome, which, as it is considered one of the most exalted efforts of fine arts, so it is strictly a work of decorative art. Descriptions were then given of several Italian details. In reference to the second division, it was said that Hindostanee, Persian, early and late, Byzantine, Arabian, and Moorish, ought to be classed as of one family, differing only in individuality. The distinction between the use of colours on flat surfaces and that of rendering the ornaments in coloured mosaics,—no more changing the character of the style than did the introduction of stuccos affect the Italian. Mr. Crabb next described the ancient and magnificent Hindoo Temple at Ajmer, with its superb screen of

Saracenic coloured architecture; also that fine specimen of Arabian art, the great Mosque of Cordova, with its coloured enrichments; noticing especially the gate of the Koran, whose intrados in mosaics of gold, blue, red, and green was of singular beauty, corresponding with similar works at Damascus and Bagdad; and it was observed, that the ceiling of wood exhibits colouring analogous to what is subsequently found in Gothic architecture. The grand palace of the Alhambra was noticed; also the polychromatic peculiarities of several buildings at Agra and Delhi, making reference to elaborate coloured drawings. The Court of the Taj was said to be 950 by 320 feet; its two mosques and grand gateway being of red sandstone, enriched by cast stuccos, white and blue; the central immense mausoleum being of white marble and gold, with coloured enrichments. The magnificent structure, forming Actmed Ab Doulsab's tomb within its towers, were said to be of white marble, richly illuminated, both exterior and interior, and rising from a terrace of red sandstone. Mr. Crabb, in commenting upon the ornamental details, stated that religious precepts forbade the representation of animal life, and that the enrichments were composed of flowers, beads, and combined convolutions of forms perfectly conventional, and designed to express colour. The profusion of ornaments was said to be distinguished by great variety and singular delicacy of execution; also that painting and sculpture were odious to the first Moslems, but that, subsequently, both western and eastern Caliphs evaded this prohibition of the Mahomedan law.

## WESTMINSTER COURT OF SEWERS.

On Friday a very numerous Court of Sewers was held, when Mr. Leslie was chosen chairman. The cash balance at the treasurer's was declared to be £2,269. 16s. 8d.; and several small accounts were paid. Mr. Cumberlege called the attention of the Court to the extraordinary fact that the premises had never been insured against fire. Messrs. Allason and Mayhew immediately examined the building, and reported to the Court; whereupon an insurance was effected, during the sitting of the Court, for 4,000*l.*, in the Westminster Fire Office.

A special Court was ordered for Tuesday, the 24th inst., at 12 o'clock, to consider the steps necessary to be taken by the commissioners, in consequence of the contemplated interference with the sewers by the many projected schemes of sewage and railway companies before Parliament.

An immense number of petitions for new sewers and drains was then disposed of in favour of the petitioners.

A very important decision was come to by the Court in the case of Clarke and Manning. The former being possessed of two houses in Bell-street, Paddington, wished permission to enter drains into the sewer for one house only. The latter refusing to allow him without paying a frontage of 15*s.* a foot. The Court thought it reasonable that both of the adjoining houses should be drained at once, and determined that Mr. Clarke should be at liberty to drain them on payment of 10*s.* per foot frontage. Mr. Clarke then tendered the sum, which Mr. Manning refused; and the Court ordered Mr. Clarke to enter the drains of the two houses into the sewer.

On the motion of Mr. T. L. Donaldson, seconded by Mr. George Knight, 100 feet was the maximum length to be allowed for No. 3 sewer, on summit levels and confined localities.

The attention of the Court was called to the filthy condition of a sewer in Charles-court, Strand, in which it was stated the soil had accumulated to within six inches of the top of it.

Messrs. Stunt, Poupart, and Thompson appeared to their commons; and Mr. Gouter, from his place, stated that the injury to the bank of the Kensington Canal, which was complained of as being weakened by default, neglect, or commission of the parties or their servants, and likely to be of most serious damage to their lands and the public, was caused by the acts of the commissioners themselves. The Court ordered its powers to be set in motion, through its solicitor, to compel the parties to secure the bank complained of.

It was resolved, that a second special court

in the ensuing week be held on Friday, the 27th inst., at 12 o'clock precisely, to consider certain motions of which notice had been given.

The remaining business on the paper was then proceeded with, and Mr. Dooll, the assistant surveyor, having presented a return of the actual expenditure upon works under 50*l.* for the six weeks from Christmas 1845, to the 5th February, 1846, from which it appeared that the total expense of those works was as follows:—

Eastern division .....	£61	1	8d
Western division .....	102	9	7d
Ranelagh district .....	7	11	9
Countess Creek district .....	18	17	2d
General disbursements .....	19	0	3

279 0 7d

The Court ordered the return to be printed.

On Tuesday, the Metropolitan and the London Sewage Manure Company's Bills were considered, and it was agreed that a clause drawn up by the solicitors of the commission, should form the basis of an application to Parliament against, but not hostilely to, the projects.

## REPORT OF THE GAUGE COMMISSIONERS.

This report, in which we have frequently referred during the past six months, has at length made its appearance. The commissioners were Sir J. M. F. Smith and Professors Alry and Barlow. Their inquiries were directed to three points:—first, whether a uniform gauge should be compulsory on all future railways; secondly, whether it is possible to obviate or mitigate the evil arising from want of uniformity; thirdly, whether it is expedient or practicable to effect a uniformity in railways already constructed, or in process of construction. In considering these questions, it became necessary to decide a fourth, as arising immediately out of the third, viz.: which of the gauges is preferable for general purposes.

On the first point, involving the more abstract advantage of uniformity, one decision only could have been anticipated. The commissioners considered it under the following heads:—as applying to fast trains, to ordinary trains, to goods' trains, and to the conveyance of troops. With regard to the first head, they do not think the inconvenience of a break of gauge of sufficient importance to call for legislative interference. With regard to the second and third, they pronounce the break as intolerable evil, imperatively demanding remedial measures; and with regard to the fourth, they are of opinion that it might expose the country to serious danger. On the second point, after considering in detail the various plans suggested of mingling the broad and narrow gauges by double lines of rails, or of adapting the carriages to fit either gauge by shifting wheels or placing them on trucks, they pronounce them severally to be impossible or dangerous, and arrive at the conclusion that none of them are calculated to remedy in any important degree the inconveniences attending a break of gauge. The third point, which they justly deem the most important, and have investigated with great minuteness, is treated in conjunction with the fourth, and is indeed merged in it.

The question of the comparative merits of the broad and narrow gauges is examined under four divisions:—safety, accommodation and convenience for passengers and goods, speed, and economy. We extract the opinions of the commissioners in their own words:—

"1. As regards the safety, accommodation and convenience of the passengers, no decided preference is due to either gauge, but on the broad gauge the motion is generally more easy at high velocities.

"2. In respect of speed, we consider the advantages are with the broad gauge, but we think the public safety would be endangered in employing the greater capabilities of the broad gauge much beyond their present use, except on roads more consolidated, and more substantially and perfectly formed, than those of the existing lines.

"3. In the commercial case of the transport of goods, we believe the narrow gauge to possess the greater convenience, and to be the more suited to the general traffic of the country.